



Primary Health Care Gender-Based Violence

Communication Job Aid: Coping with Negative Feelings

The following job aids suggest some ways that you can help survivors deal with various emotions and reactions.

Helping survivors cope with negative feelings

- **Hopelessness:** “Many people do manage to improve their situation. Over time you will likely see that there is hope.”
- **Despair:** Focus the person’s strengths and how they have been able to handle a past dangerous or difficult situation.
- **Powerlessness, loss of control:** “You have some choices and options today in how to proceed.”
- **Flashbacks:** Explain that these are common and often become less common or disappear over time.
- **Denial:** “I’m taking what you have told me seriously. I will be here if you need help in the future.”
- **Guilt and self-blame:** “You are not to blame for what happened to you. You are not responsible for the other person’s behaviour.”
- **Shame:** “There is no loss of honour in what happened. You are of value.”
- **Unrealistic fear:** Emphasize, “You are in a safe place now. We can talk about how to keep you safe.”
- **Numbness:** “This is a common reaction to difficult events. You will feel again—all in good time.”
- **Mood swings:** Explain that these can be common and should ease with the healing process.
- **Anger with perpetrator:** Acknowledge that this is a valid feeling.
- **Anxiety:** “This is common, but we can discuss ways to help you feel less anxious.”
- **Helplessness:** “We are here to help you.”